DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 212 056 EA 014 329

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TITLE Leadership for Learning: A Questionable Slogan?
PUB DATE Aug 81
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration (35th, Seattle, WA, August 16-21, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Responsibility; *Administrator Role; Elementary Secondary Education; *Leadership; Learning; *Organizational Effectiveness; Organizational Theories; *School Administration; *Values

ABSTRACT

The answer to determining organizational outcomes is not the ill-defined concept of "leadership." Rather, it is a combination of two factors: the ability and opportunity to influence others, and the value and belief system of the individual. Ability to influence is a function of one's place within the bureaucratic, professional, political, and social systems of the organization. An individual's personal bias system determines what actions will or will not be taken. Learning, defined as the planned product of formal schooling, is the goal of educational institutions. Leadership for learning implies providing direction to an organization in order to achieve the organizational goal of learning. This is done by defining the purpose of the organization and by effectively influencing decisions from a well-established philosophical, influence, and credibility base to achieve that goal. The ultimate purpose of administration is the establishment and maintenance of effective and efficient management systems for achieving organizational goals. (Author/MLF)

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LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING:

A QUESTIONABLE SLOGAN?

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August, 1981

NCPEA

EA 014 329

Leadership for Learning

I don't like the phrase "Leadership for Learning." I know AASA has used it as a slogan in order to focus the task of educational administrators, but I still don't like it. My dislike is based on my concern with the words "leadership" and "learning." These words have been used by so many people, and with so many different meanings, that it is difficult to know exactly what they do mean, and therefore, what the phrase means. When I first started working on this paper, I thought I had an idea what the slogan meant until I was talking with a colleague one day and realized that how he viewed the phrase was entirely different from the way I had been viewing it.

I propose therefore, in this paper, to examine the concepts of leadership and learning in turn, then try to draw them together, and finally to suggest an alternative which I feel does a better job of getting at the heart of the issue.

First, let me deal with the issue of leadership. I am not as enamored with the concept of leadership as many people. I do not separate leadership from management where one is focused on change and the other on maintenance. Even the administrator who is not perceived as a "leader" influences the direction and operation of the unit for which he has responsibility. The difference in perception between the leader and nonleader is based on the perceived effectiveness of the administrators in using the formal and informal power available to him; and that effectiveness is usually a function of the individual's conceptual, technical and human skills.

The way the term "leadership" is often used conjures up, for me, the shining knight on the white charger charging into battle with massed troups obediently following behind. This is a false view in education. Rarely do

we have a single well defined group with a well defined goal. Leadership seems to imply being out in front leading a group that wants to be lead.

Leadership also implies one must always be successful. If your attempt at influencing an outcome is not successful, then you are not a leader. I have often seen people labeled as leaders who just happened to be at the right place at the right time; or who started new programs and had the foresight to get new jobs before the programs collapsed around them; or who simply appeared to be enthusiastically running in the direction they were being inevitabley shoved.

I have also seen that the real influencers, the people that make the major contributions to the direction of the organization and the achievement of its goals, are often not recognized. They are not in the "visable" positions. We too often recognize as leaders only the people at the top of an organization which is a major reason why the positions of principal and superintendent are so important in education. These are the positions on which the public and client groups focus.

After reviewing the literature on leadership, it is apparent that most of it focuses on leadership style rather than the basic concept itself. In many cases, what is actually being dealt with is the human relation skill of the individual as related to the group. Rarely is the emphasis on the values and beliefs of the individual and of the group, which I feel are the true determiners of action.

If I do not see "leadership" as the answer to determining organizational outcomes, what do I see? Two major factors: the ability and opportunity to

influence and the value and belief system or personal philosophy and commitment of the individual.

An individual's ability and opportunity to influence the goals and objectives of an organization are directly related to that person's power and authority in the organization. These, in turn, are based on the individuals' formal position in the organization, his legal power, his charisma, his human relation skills, his technical expertise, his professional expertise, his organizational and management skills, and his referent power. In effect, his ability to influence or provide "leadership" is a function of his place within the bureacratic, professional, political, and social systems of the organization.

As Drucker points out, (1974, pp. 17, 319, 368) our "leaders" are in reality organizational managers. Their ability to influence decisions in all aspects of our society is a function of the positions they hold and the technical and human relation skills they bring to their positions. He also makes the point that their major task is in defining or helping their clients define the goals of the organization. Something that many educators have failed to do.

I think we confuse the issue in education when we use terms such as administrative leadership or instructional leadership. We should really be interested in developing people who understand the bases of power and authority and when, where and how to use them in order to influence and determine the outcomes of schooling.

The second factor I see as a major determiner of action is the value and belief system or personal philosophy of the individual. It is the individuals' personal bias system that determines what actions he will or will not take, activities he will or will not support, the direction he will try to move an organization, the procedures and processes for how things are done, and ultimately

why they will or will not be done. Most of the decisions in education are ultimately ones of value: where a budget will be cut, how resources are distributed, who gets hired or fired, will we bus for integration, should handicapped students be mainstreamed. The list is endless.

Now let me turn to a discussion of "learning." I am not sure how AASA is using the word. I came up with the following list of possible meanings and it is certainly not exhaustive.

Learning - The planned product of formal schooling.

- Any knowledge gained by attending school--both formal and informal.
- The process used in acquiring knowledge.
- The end product of the learning process--the outcomes--both planned and unplanned.
- The product of the activity of learning.
- The product of education.

For the purpose of this paper, I want to use the first definition: learning as the planned product of formal schooling. In this context then, the purpose or goal of educational institutions is learning and this is something we can deal with within an organizational context.

If we look at the recent work of Bloom (1980) and others in the field of learning, and their attempts to find variables which really make a difference in outcomes (learning) of formal schooling we can see that they are engaged in the basic application of the principles of scientific management: to establish a scientific basis of the job. They are trying to answer the questions: Who learns: How do they learn? What do they learn? Where do they learn? When do they learn? and Why do the learn? The very questions that need to be

answered if we are to be able to structure an organization for achieving the goal of learning.

Unfortunately, they do not focus on perhaps the more important issues of what currently is the product and what should be the product of formal schooling. The philosophic questions of: Who should learn? What should they learn? How should they learn? When should they learn? Where should they learn? are the questions which confront the school administrator. These are the questions related to values and beliefs which are at the heart of issues such as forced busing, integration, handicapped education, vocational education, christian schools, vouchers, etc. In each case, a special interest group is defining an added purpose or goal for the school. While each group has a special interest, I think fundamentally they share the same basic goals for formal schooling. They disagree, however, on how the goals should be achieved. Some of the basic goals or products of formal schooling upon which they do agree, include: mastery of basic skills in reading, writing, arithemtic; respect for traditional authority; manners; morals, appropriate speech; appropriate dress; traditions for the dominant culture; etc. It is these basic products we can and should identify.

In fact, the recent work on defining basic skills and the giving of competency tests represent attempts to better define the product of formal schooling.

However, the present approaches are too narrow in concept. I do not see any movement toward the development of a general concept of learning as the natural product of education.

Having looked at bothe leadership and learning, what does the phase "Leadership for Learning" mean? The following are some possibilities:

- Structuring the learning process to achieve learning; i.e. a product.
- Structuring the learning process to achieve a formally defined product of schooling.
- Structuring the organization in order to create an environment where learning is achieved.
- Managing for learning.
- Managing for productivity.
- Influencing for planned outcomes.

In effect, the phase implies providing direction to an organization in order to achieve the organizational goal of learning. This is done through defining the purpose of the organization (i.e. what should schools be about, what should their product look like) and effectively influencing decisions from a well established philisophical, influence, and credibility base to achieve that goal.

This is why many administrators are not perceived as leaders. They often do not have a concept of the purpose of schooling and frequently operate from a Gallup Poll mentally--doing only that which is popular. They lack a sense of direction and consequently, their organizations lack a sense of direction.

Having objected to "Leadership for Learning" and briefly suggested an alternative, the following list presents an incomplete view of what I feel are some of the characteristics effective administrators exhibit and which make a difference in action.

Effective Administrators have:

1. A concept of the organization's purpose or goal. They have a sense of what the school should be about--a sense of direction which is communicated to others.
2. A concept, encompasing both a personal and societal view, of why that goal should be achieved.

3. A plan of action or strategy designed to achieve that goal.

4. A commitment to the course of action for achieving that goal and the willingness and courage to fight for it.

5. Developed and make effective use of power, authority, and influence base designed to support their actions.

6. A knowledge of the structure of the organization, the people connected with the organization, and the environment in which they exist and the ability to engage in organizational analysis.

7. The human relation skills to match the varying requirements demanded in achieving the goal. These skills include among others, the ability to communicate effectively and the ability to manage conflict.

8. The ability to relate mangerial style to situational conditions.

The ultimate purpose of administration is the establishment and maintenence of effective and efficient management systems for achieving organizational goals. In the case of educational institutions, that goal has to be learning. Learning is the product. A product which we must define and then structure our organizations to achieve. We will not be able to do that alone. In the final analysis, it will be the value and belief systems of both administrators and client groups that will determine what that product looks like, the process through which it will be developed, and the manner in which it will be achieved.

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